TYPES OF RESPIRATOR MASKS + FAQs

THE SHORT ANSWER: All of these types are certified by their respective countries for high-level air filtration and, if worn properly, will provide excellent protection. For full protection, **what's most important is that the mask is legitimate (also see here) and fits you tightly with a good seal** (if links don't work, see bottom of page). However, even with an imperfect seal, any mask is ALWAYS better than no mask.

Mask Type	Certified By	Maximum Guaranteed Filtration*	Head Straps or Ear Loops
N95	**United States** NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health)	95%	Head straps
N99		≥99%	Head straps
KN95	**Chinese** NMPA (National Medical Products Administration)	95%	Either
KN100		≥99%	Head straps
FFP2	**European** CEN (Committee for Standardization)	94%	Either
FFP3		≥99%	Head straps
KF94 *NOTE: Sizes tend to run small, by US standards*	**Korean** FDA/MFDS (Ministry of Food and Drug Safety)	94%	Either, but usually ear loops

FAQs

What's the difference between a respirator mask and a surgical mask?

A surgical mask is ALWAYS better than nothing! However, surgical masks are not designed to protect well against small particles like aerosols, which are the main way COVID-19 is transmitted; respirator masks *are* designed to protect against these particles. Surgical masks are also not designed to seal out contaminated air, and respirator masks are. See sources and learn more about the differences here, here and here (if links don't work, scroll to bottom of page).

What about cloth masks?

Unfortunately, cloth masks provide almost no protection against newer variants of COVID-19. Only wear a cloth mask if there are truly no other options. See sources and learn more here and here (if links don't work, scroll to bottom of page).

Head straps or ear loops?

For most people, head straps provide a much better seal than ear loops, and therefore better protection — but ear loop masks still do provide protection, and **the best mask is the one you will actually wear**, so absolutely get ear loops if that's better for you!

Can I reuse a respirator mask?

Yes! You can reuse a respirator until it no longer fits properly (ex. straps loosen or break, material wears out), becomes too hard to breathe in, or becomes dirty or wet. They will last longer if you rotate between a couple different masks over the course of the week. Many

can last for up to 32 hours of wear! See sources and learn more here, here and here (if links don't work, scroll to bottom of page).

What do the different style/shape names mean (ex. boat, flat fold, duckbill)?

Learn about different mask shapes here (if links don't work, scroll to the bottom of the page).

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*When fit-tested with a full and proper seal, which includes no facial hair where the mask seals around your face. **Actual filtration may vary**, and mainly depends on how well the mask fits you. Masks that have gaps or leak will have less protection.

LINKS NOT WORKING? Google Docs does that sometimes, sorry. Here are ones you can copy and paste.

- **Check if a mask is legitimate**
  - https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/blog/12-signs-you-have-a-fake-n95-kn95-or-kf94-mask/
  - https://www.which.co.uk/news/article/ffp2-and-n95-masks-what-to-know-and-how-to-spot-fakes-as9kg0M0RXQL
  - https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/default.html

- **Check if a mask fits you with a proper seal**
  - https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-133/pdfs/2010-133.pdf

- **Difference between respirator and surgical masks:**
    - https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/commentary-what-can-masks-do-part-1-science-behind-covid-19-protection
    - https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/personal-protective-equipment-infection-control/n95-respirators-surgical-masks-face-masks-and-barrier-face-coverings#s2
    - https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/publicppe/community-ppe.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprevent-getting-sick%2Ftypes-of-masks.html#anchor_5146932324

- **Cloth masks:**
    - https://health.clevelandclinic.org/are-cloth-masks-enough-against-omicron/
    - https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/12/23/1066871176/mask-n95-omicron-contagious

- **Reusing respirator masks:**
    - https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/can-you-reuse-a-kn95-or-n95-mask-experts-say-yes-but-follow-these-steps-180979404/
    - https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2022/reusing-n95-masks.html
    - https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/blog/how-to-reuse-n95-kn95-and-other-disposable-masks

- **Style and shape information:**
    - https://www.projectn95.org/find-the-right-mask/